

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 are pending in the Application. Claim 1 is amended to incorporate features recited in claims 3 and 5, and those two claims are accordingly cancelled.

Timely and favorable consideration on the merits is requested.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached Appendix is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made".

Respectfully submitted,

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Enclosure: Appendix

APPENDIX

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Amended) A method of desalinating or purifying saltwater or otherwise polluted water-to-be-treated via hydrate fractionation, said method comprising:

introducing said water-to-be-treated into a hydrate fractionation column;

injecting a hydrate-forming gas or mixture of gases into said water-to-be-treated under temperature and pressure conditions conducive to the formation of gas hydrate, whereupon said gas or mixture of gases reacts with said water-to-be-treated at a point of hydrate formation to yield gas hydrate and residual fluid while liberating heat of hydrate formation which tends to warm said residual fluid; and

allowing said gas hydrate to rise through said hydrate fractionation column and to enter a hydrate dissociation region in which said gas hydrate dissociates and releases fresh water and said hydrate-forming gas or mixture of gasses;

wherein said hydrate fractionation column is configured so that fluid is removed from said hydrate fractionation column from a position below said point of hydrate formation, said method comprising controlling flow rates of fluid through said hydrate fractionation column such that substantially all of said residual fluid flows downward from said point of hydrate formation and out of said hydrate fractionation column at said position below said point of hydrate fractionation and [wherein said method is controlled] such that said gas hydrate separates from said residual fluid at or near said point of hydrate formation, whereby heat of hydrate formation is substantially carried away from said gas hydrate and out of said hydrate fractionation column by means of said residual fluid flowing out of said hydrate fractionation column via said portion below said point of hydrate formation.